

VALIDATE

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You validate when you do activities or present information that cause people to believe you, trust you and have confidence in you.

People are more apt to buy from you when they trust you. Logical, isn't it?

In the AID,Inc.[®] system, the Validation Step isn't necessarily a separate step, but rather an ongoing process. It begins the moment you come into contact with a prospect, through the interview and close, and on through the years of follow up and relationships. Repeat business and deep relationships with your clients are a result of this process.

The Validation Step overlays the whole AID,Inc.[®] system.

Although validation is an ongoing process, the reason we put it where we do in AID,Inc.[®] is simply this:

Until a person believes you, has confidence in you, and trusts you, you'll have a tough time negotiating and closing.

Often people's hesitation is due to the fact that you haven't validated yourself, your product, or your company. They don't have enough confidence in you yet. This can explain why they often act in an illogical manner and don't positively respond to what you can see as a very simple choice or decision.

You may not have validated yourself enough if you begin to get negative responses near the end of your presentation, like the following.

"We want to look around and make sure we're getting the best buy."

"We want to buy from someone who has been in the business longer."

"We want to think about and check your figures out."

"We don't want to be pressured into doing anything."

Listen for signals from people that tell you they don't totally trust you, feel comfortable with you, or have enough rapport with you.

Maybe they didn't understand the plan you presented or they didn't understand the benefits clearly or, perhaps, they don't trust you yet.

SELLING PRESSURE

For years we've heard terms like "high pressure selling." This usually referred to a salesperson who came on quite strong during the close or who tried to close too early and too often.

But, think a moment and see if you agree with this statement, "Selling pressure is a reality only when perceived so by the prospective client."

The pain of the problem has to always be stronger than the cost of the cure. The pain of the problem has to be their pain or their family's or businesses' pain.

For instance, suppose you went to a physician and upon listening to your heart with a stethoscope he or she then put you on a treadmill. Then after a few moments became very panicky and said to you, "We must perform surgery immediately!"

Now, bypass surgery will probably cost from \$15,000 to \$25,000. But the doctor says, "You must do it now," and leads you toward the operating room.

Was that pressure? Yes, of course. But did you perceive it as such? Probably not. You would probably be thrilled that the doctor discovered your problem and knew what solution to prescribe.

So what is pressure and how do prospective clients perceive it? Remember this principle of Integrity Selling®:

Where trust and rapport are high, selling pressure is usually perceived as low, regardless of how much there actually is.

But where trust and rapport are low, selling pressure is perceived as high, regardless of how much there actually is.

Now, stop and think about this a moment. Understanding it has everything to do with your success with turning people into valued clients. It also underscores why trust and rapport impact closing so much.

VALIDATION ACTION GUIDES

1. Translate product or service features into customer benefits.
2. Justify price and emphasize value.
3. Offer proof and evidence.
4. Reassure and reinforce people to neutralize their fear of buying.

TRANSLATE PRODUCT OR SERVICE FEATURES INTO CUSTOMER BENEFITS

One of the ways to validate is to translate product features into benefits for your prospective clients. You do this when you're going through your proposal.

For instance, let's say that you're a life insurance salesperson and you're explaining the *death benefit*. The feature is that a certain sum of money is immediately paid to the named beneficiary.

The benefits are that it's income tax free, if paid in a lump sum. Also, that it's paid at a time when it's most needed. This gives surviving persons sufficient funds to handle all expenses and enough for an investment fund.

A feature is how you'd describe your service or product. A benefit is what that feature will do for people – the satisfaction or enjoyment they'll have when they purchase it.

Most salespeople talk about features rather than benefits. They make the assumption that if people know what their product or service is, they'll be able to make a buying decision.

“WHAT THIS MEANS TO YOU IS”

Whenever you’re talking to people about your proposal or recommendations and you mention a feature, always use the Six Magic Words.

The Six Magic Words are “what this means to you is. . .”

The way you use them is anytime you mention a feature or description of a product, you immediately use the Six Magic Words and then mention a benefit.

Remember:

1. A feature is what your product or service is made up of – a description of its sales points or components.
2. A benefit is what the feature will do for customers – how it will help them.

Take a few moments and write down on the following chart some features of your product or service. Then beside these, write the benefits people will enjoy when they purchase it.

	Feature	Benefit
1.	_____	_____
	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____
	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____
	_____	_____

EVIDENCE OF SATISFIED CUSTOMERS

You’ll want to consistently collect testimonial letters from your clients. If you’re new in the business, you may not have made many sales. In this case you can use testimonial letters from clients that other people in your organization have received.

In most fields, good third-party testimonial letters will do more than anything to validate you. You should collect as many as you can as you grow in the business.

While they're not easy to get, mainly because people don't know what to say, here's a tip about how to get them. After you make a sale and when you deliver the product or install the service, explain to your client that your business thrives on satisfied referrals. And that if they have been happy with your service, you'd appreciate a letter from them.

Now, the fact is that almost no one will actually follow up and write one for you without help and encouragement. So, here's a way to help them. Prepare a form letter and when they agree to write you a letter, say,

"I know that it isn't convenient and could even be difficult to know what to say in one . . .

"So I have prepared a model letter that gives you a format. Of course, you can say whatever you choose. This is only a help."

Hand the model letter to them, with a self-addressed, stamped envelope, and say,

"If you'll write a letter this evening and put it in the mail tomorrow, I'll appreciate it very much. It will help me help more people.

"May I ask this of you?"

MODEL LETTER

Here's a suggestion for a model letter. You can change it to your own words.

Mr. Bill Adams
100 Business Park
Ourtown, USA 11111

Dear Bill:

As one of your newest clients, we appreciate your helping us install our new software system.

We also appreciate the manner in which you approached us. Your professionalism and concern helped us understand what we can do in order to enjoy greater productivity.

We look forward to our future relationship.

Sincerely,

John Williams
XYZ Manufacturing Company

Now, in order to make your letters sound authentic, you'll need to vary the model letters you give out.

Then when you receive letters in the mail, call and thank your clients. This is not only common courtesy but gives you another chance to build your relationship with them.

THE POWER OF TESTIMONIAL LETTERS

You can use all kinds of visuals – statistics, statements from famous people, personal statements, etc., but few pieces of evidence will be as powerful as good client letters. They say you're a professional that has satisfied clients and that they took the time to write.

One effective way to use testimonial letters is in your pre-approach mailings. Anytime you mail a letter to a potential prospect, enclose one or two client letters.

A similar way to validate yourself, using the power of third-party influence, is to ask your clients to call someone and recommend you. Impossible, you say?

No, consider this:

"Bill, you have been a good friend and have given me support in many ways...

"I'm talking to (or have an appointment with) John Jones . . .

"Would you mind calling him (or allowing him to call you) and just saying that you're a client of mine and whatever you want to say to him?

"His number is..."

"Asking a friend to call someone on your behalf would be an imposition," you say? Not at all. If you've served your clients well, you do them a favor when you ask for this help. Highly paid sales pros do it all the time.

VALIDATION REALLY BEGINS WITH WHO YOU ARE

Sincerity is the most powerful form of validation. When you truly focus on your mission and honestly see your business as one that creates value for people, your sincerity will show through.

So, in this sense, validation depends more on *who you are* and who you represent than *what you do*.

When you keep your mission focus – when you see your business as creating value for customers – you will be mission driven. And you will carry with you strong validation.

Remember that validation isn't a separate step of the AID, Inc.® system. Rather, it's an ongoing process. You validate from your pre-approach to your close and on through your support and follow-up.

The reason this step is placed where it is in the system is this:

Before you can negotiate and close a sale, you must first make sure the prospective client has confidence in you and trusts you. You must have validated yourself, your recommendation and your company.

As you think about these ideas, please take a few moments and write in some responses to the following questions.

1. How have specific people described your sincerity?

2. What value do you create for people?

3. What do you give clients that they can't get elsewhere?

4. What words would you like for people to use when they describe your level of integrity and professionalism?

HOW YOU'LL KNOW WHEN YOU'VE DONE THIS STEP

1. People are open to you and trust you.
2. You have listened so you understand how they feel.
3. They have confidence in your organization.
4. They give you information freely and willingly.
5. You talk in terms of their end-result benefits.
6. They have made a decision that you're the kind of person they want to do business with.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT VALIDATION

1. People are more apt to buy from you when they feel good about you.
2. Sincerity and a genuine interest in helping people are the strongest kinds of validation.
3. People will believe what others say about you more than they'll believe what you say about yourself.
4. Validate yourself through your clients. Get them to call people and recommend you or receive calls from people.
5. Going for a close too quickly or too strongly tends to harm your validation.
6. Your specialized knowledge strongly validates you.
7. People will trust you when you are the kind of person who people can trust.
8. Become known as "an extra mile" person.
9. Deliver 110% of what you're paid to deliver.
10. Give clients unexpected, unpromised extra services.

VALIDATION SELF-EVALUATION SHEET

Please answer the following questions, after reading the validation section.

1. What have you learned about validating yourself from this segment?

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

- d. _____

2. What are your strengths in this step?

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

- d. _____

3. What areas do you need to strengthen within yourself in this area?

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

- d. _____

4. Now, *before proceeding to the next chapter*, make an appointment to visit with your manager or with the program coordinator to discuss your responses written above.